



Keeping Up With Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center

Since 1984, Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC), a not-for-profit group of resident-volunteers, has supported Alexandrians with mental disabilities and their families through advocacy, education and fundraising to meet social, vocational and emergency needs.

SPRING 2013 FUND DRIVE

friendsofamhc@gmail.com

alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/friends

The People We Serve

Nearly 91% of the over 4,831 Alexandrians served by the Alexandria Community Service Board (CSB) last year have annual family incomes under \$25,000. Alexandrians of all ages receive mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services. Of the CSB's clients, 30% are children aged 0-19.

Friends is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization. Friends supports clients of the CSB. The CSB oversees the City's publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental illness, intellectual disability or a substance dependency. CSB programs are implemented by the City's Department of Community & Human Services. Visit alexandriava.gov/dchs for more information.

Friends also supports community education projects with the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign, special activities for CSB consumers and West End Wellness Center members, and supplemental equipment and furnishings for CSB residential facilities.

Consider a Donation

Please make your check payable to Friends of the AMHC and mail to Friends, 720 N. Saint Asaph St., Alexandria, VA 22314. You will receive a receipt. Help us be green by including your email address.

To donate online, go to Razoo.com

If you would like to make a donation in memory of or in honor of someone, include a note with your contribution.

A Call to Action

Questions about mental health care have been echoing across the nation. "How can we embolden people to access and maintain treatment before their mental health conditions become severe?" "How can we improve our system so people don't fall between the cracks?"

Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, made the following suggestion in USA Today (Feb.4, 2013). *"We often fail to recognize the signs of mental illness, especially in young people. And when we do see those signs, our first reaction is often not to reach out, but to turn away. This is a culture we all contribute to. And it's one that all of us -- community leaders, teachers, pastors, health providers, parents, neighbors and friends -- need to help change if we want to reduce the tragic burden of untreated mental health conditions."*

In short, we all need to do our part to meet this national challenge. Knowledgeable, responsive community members joining with government leaders and mental health professionals can bring about improvement in mental health care in our country. When we see someone struggling and we reach out with understanding and information, we increase the likelihood they will access the services needed. With our encouragement and acceptance, we increase the likelihood that involvement in mental health services continues. Help us build a stronger community and reduce stigma in Alexandria by participating in the following events.

Spring2ACTion on Alexandria's Day of Giving - April 17

On April 17, donate to any of over 40 local charities by going online to www.Spring2ACTion.org. Put Friends at the top of your donation list! Donating online on April 17 helps Friends provide financial needs assistance to Community Services Board clients and supports anti-stigma programs. Your online donation also qualifies you and Friends of AMHC for cash awards and prizes.



A Friends' supporter enclosed a note with a December donation. "I made a donation earlier this year, but am sending this second one in memory of everyone affected by the tragedy in Newtown...as the mother of someone who has received services from the Community Services Board, I know how much you care – and help – those in our community who need you."

Join Delegate Rob Krupicka at a Mental Health Forum on Children and Youth, Saturday, May 18

Please join us at the Nannie Lee Recreation Center, 1108 Jefferson Drive, Alexandria, on May 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a community forum. Two panel presentations and a Q&A session will address mental health issues, services, and needs in our region for children and youth (preschool through college). Also attending will be other state elected officials. Childcare for children ages 4 and up will be available on site. To reserve childcare, email Donielle.Marshall@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.3523.



Delegate Rob Krupicka is hosting this event, which is co-sponsored by the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Anti-Stigma Hope Campaign, the Alexandria Community Services Board, the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services, Friends of the AMHC and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. A long time supporter of mental health services, Delegate Krupicka has expressed particular concern about children's mental health needs stating, *"Helping all students succeed in school and college requires us to ensure appropriate mental health services are available and that school personnel and parents know enough about them to make sure kids can get the support they need."* During the General Assembly's recent session, Delegate Krupicka successfully sponsored a budget amendment that will provide Mental Health First Aid training for Virginia school personnel.

Attend the Opening Reception of the Third Annual Art Uniting People Exhibit - Thursday, May 9

This year's *Art Uniting People* exhibit celebrates creativity and mental health by engaging the community in a conversation about the unique qualities and universal traits that exist in all of us. The opening reception, which will take place at the Nannie Lee Recreation Center in Alexandria on May 9 from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m., provides an opportunity to view the artwork of Northern Virginia artists of all ages and to talk with the artists about the meaning, inspiration, and creative process related to their works. Presented by groups and individuals who serve on the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign, the exhibit is part of an effort to raise awareness about the stigma faced by those with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities. Light refreshments will be available."

At 6:30 p.m., celebrate the creative spirit with Auntie Oyé & Friends! Drumming, dance and storytelling!"

"Engaging people in arts programs not only reduces negative self perceptions but also educates the public that people with mental illnesses are just like anyone else, with a range of talents, skills, and enthusiasms." -Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity, and Social Inclusion. <http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/action/heartsandminds.aspx>

Celebrate Children's Mental Health Awareness Day at a Fun Fair – Saturday, May 11

Enjoy games, prizes, arts and crafts, piñatas and clowns at the Tenants and Workers United Lot, 3801 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria 22305, on Saturday, May 11, from 1p.m. to 5 p.m. Hosted by the Department of Community and Human Services' Center for Children and Families in partnership with Tenant and Workers United and the Center for Alexandria's Children, this delightful celebration promotes resiliency from birth to adulthood. Resource materials will be available.



Enroll in Mental Health First Aid Classes

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches how to provide first aid-type assistance to someone showing the symptoms of a mental health condition or experiencing a mental health crisis until appropriate help can be engaged. The training, presented by the Department of Community and Human Services, is open and free to anyone who lives or works in the City. MHFA may be of special interest to businesses, faith communities, school personnel, or social service providers. This spring a class called Mental Health First Aid for Youth will offer training to individuals 16 years of age and older who work with youth 12 -18 years of age. Classes will take place on the following dates and times. To register, please contact Donielle.Marshall@alexandriava.gov.

April 30, May 1, May 7 & May 8 (5-8 p.m.)
May 14, May 16, May 21 & May 23 (5-8 p.m.)
MHFA for Youth May 1 & May 8 (4-8 p.m.)



"The instructors were excellent in providing an introduction to mental health issues -- what to do and what not to do in approaching someone who might be in crisis. Also included is a well-done manual that will be a useful reference." - Jill Ahrold, Mental Health First Aid Student

Read Articles on Mental Health in the Alexandria Gazette

Mary Anne Weber, Chairperson of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign, is writing monthly articles about mental health in the Alexandria Gazette Packet. Each article contains announcements about upcoming events and opportunities.

Spring Newsletter Honorees

Donations were made in memory of Bruce Thompson, Janet Distler and Samuel Shulman, and in honor of Mike Gilmore, Jane Hassell, and those affected by the Newtown tragedy.

Advocacy Report

Friends board members contacted mental health advocates throughout the state to support Delegate Krupicka's budget amendment that will provide MHFA training to school personnel. Also, this spring Friends sent a letter and testified at a City Council public hearing to express their concern about cuts made to DCHS staff and services in the City's proposed 2014 budget.

See Four of More than 100 Requests Filled for CSB Clients this Year:

A youth who was discharged from foster care when he was 18 and who experienced a period of homelessness, was able to hold two jobs. He secured a shared living space, and needed \$350 for a security deposit. Friends paid the amount so this young man could move into a new home.

The insurance company used by a Safe Haven resident changed its rates. The co-pays for his psychotropic medications skyrocketed. Friends purchased a one month supply of one of his medications while the case manager worked with the company to reduce the rates.

Friends paid for a teen to participate in an art class, an activity that would improve her coping skills and increase her self-confidence. Her case manager wrote, "[She] absolutely 'LOVES IT'" [and] states that she is learning a lot and is enjoying every class. Her mother is also excited. Thanks again for all that Friends does to help our young people and families make strides to improve their lives."

Due to mental illness, a CSB client did not pay her gas bill for several months. With the encouragement of her case manager, she paid it in full, but was unable to pay the reconnection and deposit fee needed to restore the gas. The rules of her housing authority state that a client will face eviction if utilities are not working. Friends paid the needed \$215 to restore the gas and keep her in her home.

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**Let's be green! Please send us your email address.
Send your email address and comments to friendsofamhc@gmail.com**